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ABSTRACT

Mutual support groups in schools can be developed as part of strategies to provide assistance for parents or other family members, students, or school staff. These groups can also be used to provide support for newcomers and others in periods of transition. This technical aid packet describes the process as used with parents, but the procedures suggested can be adapted readily for use with students or staff. A sequential approach is described that involves working with the school to get started, recruiting members, training them to run meetings, and offering off-site consultation as requested. The following sections are included: (1) "School-Based Mutual Support Groups: An Overview"; (2) "School-Based Mutual Support Groups: Getting Started"; (3) "Getting Started"; (4) "Member Recruitment"; (5) "Parent Training" with outlines for six training meetings; (6) "Off-Site Consultation"; and (7) "Concluding Remarks." As additional resources, seven national self-help clearinghouses and two Web sites that are relevant to mutual support groups are listed. As resource data, excerpts are provided from two evaluation articles: "Latina Mothers' Help Seeking at a School-Based Mutual Support Group" by Jane M. Simoni ("Journal of Community Psychology," v21 Jul 7 1993) and "School-Based Mutual Support Groups for Low-Income Parents" by Jane M. Simoni and Howard S. Adelman ("The Urban Review," v25 n4 1993). (Contains 11 exhibits.) (SLD)

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*From the Center's Clearinghouse ...**

A Technical Aid Packet on

School-Based Mutual Support Groups

(For Parents, Staff, Older Students)

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Support comes in part from the Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Office of Adolescent Health.

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UCLA CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS*

Under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Department of Psychology at UCLA, our center approaches mental health and psychosocial concerns from the broad perspective of addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development. Specific attention is given policies and strategies that can counter fragmentation and enhance collaboration between school and community programs.

MISSION: ***To improve outcomes for young people by enhancing policies, programs, and practices relevant to mental health in schools.***

Through collaboration, the center will

- **enhance practitioner roles, functions and competence**
- **interface with systemic reform movements to strengthen mental health in schools**
- **assist localities in building and maintaining their own infrastructure for training, support, and continuing education that fosters integration of mental health in schools**

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*In 1996, two national training and technical assistance centers focused on mental health in schools were established with partial support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Office of Adolescent Health. As indicated, one center is located at UCLA; the other is at the University of Maryland at Baltimore and can be contacted toll free at 1-(888) 706-0980.

What is the Center's Clearinghouse?

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- Specific psychosocial problems
- Programs and processes
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- E-mail us at **smhp@ucla.edu**
- FAX us at (310) 206-8716
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- Write School Mental Health Project/Center for Mental Health in Schools, Dept. of Psychology, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

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All materials from the Center's Clearinghouse are available for a minimal fee to cover the cost of copying, handling, and postage. Eventually, we plan to have some of this material and other Clearinghouse documents available, at no-cost, on-line for those with Internet access.

If you know of something we should have in the clearinghouse, let us know.

1/14/98

Preface

Mutual support groups in schools can be developed as part of strategies providing assistance for parents or other family members, students, or school staff. These groups also can be used to provide support for newcomers or others undergoing periods of transition. Of course these groups offer a useful strategy for enhancing home involvement with a school.

This technical aid describes the process as used with parents; however, the procedures described can readily be adapted for use with others (e.g., students, staff).

Jane Simoni prepared this technical aid based on her work in developing and implementing the ParentTalk and PadresHablan groups at several schools. In doing so, she benefitted from training and materials from the California Self-Help Center as well as from the close working relationship between our university-based project and the Los Angeles Unified School District. Additional financial support for development of the work came from the UCLA Graduate Division, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education. Special thanks go to the many parents and staff in the participating schools, the School Mental Health Project staff members, and the many UCLA students who are working so hard in the interest of youth, families and communities.

Introduction to

SCHOOL-BASED MUTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS
(For Parents, Staff, and Older Students)

This aid focuses on steps and-tasks related to establishing mutual support groups in a school setting. A sequential approach is described that involves (1) working within the school to get started, (2) recruiting members, (3) training them on how to run their own meetings, and (4) offering off-site consultation as requested. The specific focus here is on parents; however, the procedures are readily adaptable for use with others, such as older students and staff.

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SCHOOL-BASED MUTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS: AN OVERVIEW

On the experience of a parent in a mutual support group:

There is the exhilarating feeling that one is no longer alone--that all parents are in the same boat, whether they can row it or not (p. 48).

Brown, 1976

What are Mutual Support Groups?

Essentially, mutual support groups are "composed of members who share a common condition, situation, heritage, symptom, or experience. They are largely self-governing and self-regulating. They emphasize self-reliance and generally offer a face-to-face or phone-to-phone fellowship network, available and accessible without charge. They tend to be self-supporting rather than dependent on external funding" (Lieberman, 1986, p. 745).

Mutual support groups assume various forms, from the highly structured daily meeting format of the 12-Step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous to the more informal diurnal gatherings of friends and co-workers. Among other variables, mutual support groups differ according to size, longevity, structure, technology, level of development, purported goals, public image, and relationships with other mutual support groups and community service systems (Borkman, 1990; Powell, 1987). The form of mutual support groups is limited only by the needs and ingenuity of their members.

What are the Benefits of Mutual Support?

Summarizing the benefits of mutual support, authors of the training manual for group starters produced by the California Self-Help Center (CS-HC) state that "groups of people with common concerns start with a potential for mutual understanding and empathy which helps build trust, openness and a feeling of belonging, which in turn, enhances coping, problem solving and self-empowerment."

For the socially isolated, mutual support groups reduce the sense of aloneness, offering a new community of peers that can be supportive both during and between group meetings. In addition to receiving emotional support and empathic understanding, members acquire practical advice and information from individuals in similar predicaments or life circumstances. Mutual support groups also provide the opportunity for optimistic peer comparisons, as members realize with relief that their problems really are not so extraordinary and that others with similar problems are working toward their resolution. Finally, members of mutual support groups benefit from what Reissman (1965) has called the helper-

therapy principle. According to Reissman, helpers often benefit more than the helped. Helping others purportedly (a) increases feelings of independence, social usefulness, interpersonal competence, and equality with others, (b) begets social approval, and (c) results in personalized learning and self-reinforcement (Gartner & Reissman, 1977).

Why Introduce Mutual Support Groups Into the Schools?

Perhaps the most compelling reason for introducing mutual aid interventions into the schools is that present attempts to serve parents from within the public school system are inadequate. Many schools address the needs of parents by offering parent training sessions (e.g., Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1985). These programs are often targeted at lower SES and ethnic minority parents, who are seen as lacking "appropriate" child rearing skills and as not adequately involved in their children's schooling (Ascher, 1988; Ascher & Flaxman, 1985, Herman & Yeh, 1983). Powell (1988) describes the rationales for such parent education programs as resting on one of two premises: (a) parents are ignorant of new research in child development that would be beneficial to them or (b) parents need to be taught how to relate to their children. These interventions typically consist of a professional providing several lessons and leading a related discussion. Toward the end of such programs, parents often indicate a desire to continue meeting with each other as a resource for ongoing social support (Fritz, 1985). However, without proper training, such groups tend to be short-lived (e.g., Leon, Mazur, Montalvo, & Rodrieguez, 1984).

In contrast to the traditional parent educational model, which aims primarily at imparting information, Powell (1988) describes the support-centered discussion group, which emphasizes the supportive relationship among group members. According to Powell,

In support groups, discussion is a means of developing ties with other individuals, enabling members to increase the size and resourcefulness of their social networks. Group discussion also serves a social comparison function, allowing members to realize that their parenting experiences and feelings may be similar to others. It is assumed that these group processes lead to a *supported* parent . . . (whereas) a traditional parent education group (leads to) a *well-informed* parent. (p. 112)

Mutual support groups constitute a potentially beneficial supplement to current parent training programs, with several advantages. First, the groups are cost effective, involving only minimal initial professional consultation. Additionally, they constitute a nonpathologically focused approach which aims to capitalize on existing strengths rather than remedying "deficits" based on external standards. Because of their self-led nature, mutual support groups for parents also provide an opportunity for self-efficacy and personal empowerment. By drawing parents into the school, the groups may also lead to enhanced parent involvement in their children's schooling. Moreover, a well-structured group could bestow all the benefits of traditional parent training (by inviting in guest lecturers, for example), while also offering all the advantages of a parent-led group based on an empowerment model.

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SCHOOL-BASED MUTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS: GETTING STARTED

Qualities of a Good Group Starter

A good group starter is a catalyst not a leader. She or he will guide, direct, advise, and model in a way that gives parents confidence in their own abilities. A good starter is self-assured and effective enough to get a group going, yet is not so attached to being in control that he or she does not let the members "own" their group. No specific training or schooling is required.

It is best to begin a group with a co-starter, as working in pairs provides the starters with the support needed to persist. Ideally, a starting pair might consist of one person who works at the school and one parent who is a regular volunteer or who is already involved at the school in some way. If parents are too timid to take on the role of co-starter, they should be encouraged to help in other ways. For example, parents may be able to recruit new members at PTA meetings or help with child care the first few meetings.

Selecting a Time and Place

You may wish initially to survey interested parents regarding their preferred times to meet. Two convenient times for most parents are early in the morning when they drop their children off at school (i.e., around 8:15 AM) or in the evening after work and supper (e.g., 7 PM). Offering two groups, one in the evening for working parents and one in the morning for other parents is a good idea if feasible. In an ethnically diverse school, groups conducted in different languages usually are necessary.

Initially, have parents meet at the school, a central, neutral location. Later parents may opt to meet in each other's homes. Within the school, a warm and inviting room such as the school library is best. The auditorium can work for bigger groups or if no other rooms are available.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

MEMBER RECRUITMENT

There are various ways to spread the word about a new parent group. Many schools have a monthly newsletter which is mailed to all parents, an ideal forum for an announcement. Sending flyers home through the children is another inexpensive way of inviting all parents. (See Exhibits A-C for examples of flyers and Exhibit E for a sample letter to teachers.)

Although flyers are a convenient way of reaching a large number of parents, personal contact can be more compelling. Try approaching parents as they drop their children off at school or calling potential participants. The school may have lists of names and numbers of parents from attendance sheets of previous parent meetings or from PTA enrollment. Interested parents can help spread the word.

Parents respond well when group starters describe the advantages of the group. Mutual Support Groups are a place to:

- get parenting ideas and advice
- join with other parents to give themselves more power in their lives and within the school
- have fun
- meet new friends
- share ideas
- just listen

Recruitment does not always end when the meetings begin. Typically, new members will be welcomed for the first few weeks. Toward this end, a recruitment flyer such as the one displayed in Exhibit D can be distributed by group members. One of the more artistic members may be able to make a poster for prominent display in the school lobby.

PARENT TRAINING

A meeting-by-meeting procedure for training parents on how to run their own groups is outlined on the following pages. In essence, the group starters meet with the group for four weeks, explaining the concept of mutual aid and instructing the parents in a format they can use to run their own group. At the fifth meeting, parents are encouraged to meet on their own to practice their new skills and gain confidence in their own autonomy. At the sixth meeting, the starters return for a final time to encourage the group and to say good-bye. Thereafter, they serve as off-site consultants at the members' discretion.

GETTING STARTED CAN BE FRUSTRATING.

REMEMBER:

1. BE PATIENT
   It can take time to get the word out about a new group. In the beginning, several dedicated parents are all you need.

2. BE FLEXIBLE
   Group size and membership may vary from week to week. Be ready to help newcomers get going.

3. GIVE AWAY YOUR POWER
   Forming mutual support groups is a way of empowering parents, so let them play a leading role from the beginning. For example, let parents help set up the room if they get there early. When asked a question, encourage other members to respond

---

Meeting #1:
Introductions and Guidelines

Preparation

- •Make contact with partner
- •Recruit someone to look after the children (an older student may be available)
- •Check that the school has reserved the room for you
- •Come early to prepare coffee and refreshments and set up the room
- •Get name tags for parents
- •Call the parents who have expressed an interest to remind them to come

Procedure

- Greet members as they arrive and give them a name tag to fill out
- Serve refreshments
- Sit in a circle
- Go around the circle having members say name and children's names and ages
- Make the group presentation (see below)
- Group discussion time
  - Members take turns saying what they would like from the group
  - General discussion
- Wrap-up
  - Members each say what they learned or liked about the group
- At the end
  - Ask for a volunteer for refreshments for next meeting
  - Ask members to bring a friend, neighbor, or spouse next time

Presentation

A. -Concept of mutual support: Parents helping parents
-Parents can support each other.
-We think you have a lot of knowledge to share.
-You are all experts at something.

B. - The role of the group starters
-We are group starters, not group leaders.
-We will help the group get started.
-We will teach you how to run the group.
-We will teach you how to take turns leading the group so that no one does all the work.
-Afterwards, parents will run the group.
-We will help out only when you want us to.

C. -The schedule of the group
-We will all meet together for four weeks.
-The group will meet on their own without the starter (meeting #5).
-The group starter will come back for meeting #6.
-The group starter will then be available by phone.

D. -Guidelines (distribute and discuss "Guidelines" handout)

Meeting #2:
The Four-Part Format

Preparation

- Make contact with partner
- Call to remind parent who volunteered to bring refreshments
- Recruit someone to look after the children (an older student may be available)

Procedure

- Greet members as they arrive
- Make a name tag for each if there are many new members
- Refreshments served
- Sit in a circle
- Go around the circle saying name and children's names and ages
- Make the group presentation (see below)
- Lead the group in the 4-part format
- At the end
  Select a leader and timekeeper for the next meeting

Presentation

A. Briefly review introductory presentation
   1. Parenting helping parents
   2. Role of the group starters
   3. Group schedule

B. Briefly review "Guidelines" handout--see if members can remember them
   1. Time
   2. Attendance
   3. Confidentiality
   4. No cross-talk

C. Distribute and discuss 'Meeting Format" handout

Meeting #3:
Parents' Turn

Preparation

- Make contact with partner,
- Call to remind leader to bring refreshments and timekeeper to bring toys or another person to care for the children

Procedure,

- Greet members as they arrive
- Refreshments served
- Go around circle, checking in
- Make the group presentation (see below)
- The group leader and timekeeper chosen last time run the meeting according to the 4-part format
- Announce that the group starter will try to remain quiet but will be available for questions
- At the end:
  - -Discuss what it was like for the group leader and timekeeper
  - -Make sure group leader and timekeeper are chosen for the next meeting
  - -Be sure to praise the timekeeper and group leader and reinforce the group for running the meeting by themselves
  - -If necessary, ask for volunteers to recruit new members either by calling or distributing handouts

Presentation

A. Review introductory presentation
   1. Parenting helping parents
   2. Our role
   3. Group schedule

B. Review "Guidelines" handout--see if members can remember them
   1. Time
   2. Attendance
   3. Confidentiality
   4. No cross-talk

C. Review "Meeting Format" handout
   1. 4-part format
      Announcements
      Check-in
      Group Discussion
      Wrap-up

   2. Roles of leader and timekeeper

Meeting # 4:
*"W.I.S.E. Advice"**

Preparation

- Make contact with partner
- Call to remind leader to bring refreshments and timekeeper to bring toys or another person to care for the children

Procedure

- Greet members as they arrive
- Go around circle, checking in
- Make group presentation
- The designated group leader and timekeeper run the meeting according to the 4 part format.
- Announce that the group starter will try to remain quiet but will be available for questions.
- At the end:
  - -Discuss what it was like for the group leader and timekeeper
  - -Make sure group leader and timekeeper are chosen for the next meeting
  - -Be sure to praise the timekeeper and group leader
  - -Reinforce the group for running the meeting by themselves
  - -Ask members if they would like a list of their names and telephone numbers to be distributed at the meeting #6
  - -Remind the group that they will be meeting on their own next time

Presentation

A. Review "Guidelines" handout--see if members can remember them
   1. Time
   2. Attendance
   3. Confidentiality
   4. No cross-talk

B. Review "Meeting Format' handout
   1. 4-part format:
      -Announcements
      -Check-in
      -Group Discussion
      -Wrap-up
   2. Roles of leader and timekeeper

C. Introduce the topic of advice giving
   1. General discussion of good vs. bad advice - solicit examples
   2. Distribute and discuss 'W.I.S.E. Advice" Handout
   3. Practice with a sample problem

* W = Does the person <u>want</u> to hear advice?
I = Are you <u>informed</u> about what the person has already tried?
S = Has the advice you want to give been <u>successful</u> for you?
E = Are you trying to be <u>empathetic</u> and caring as well as helpful?

Meeting #5:
On Their Own

Preparation

- Make contact with partner
- Call to remind leader to bring refreshments and timekeeper to bring toys or another person to care for the children

Procedure

- Parents meet on their own

Meeting #6:
Consolidation and Good-byes

Preparation

•Make contact with partner
•Copy the list of parent names and phone numbers if parents requested it

Procedure
•Go around circle, checking in
•Find out how the meeting #5 went
•Announce that this is the last time the group starter will be present during the group but emphasize that the starter will call to check how things are going and can be contacted at any time (be sure to leave an address and telephone number at the office) (*Also, see below*)
•Remind group of options available to them, such as meeting biweekly or monthly, inviting speakers in, making announcements at PTA meetings, etc.
•Make group presentation
•The designated group leader and timekeeper run the meeting according to the 4-part format
•Announce that the group starter will try to remain quiet but will be available for questions as usual

•At the end:
Distribute list of members' names
Encourage the group in their independence
Good-byes

Presentation

•Two last pieces of advice:
1. Learning to Listen - sometimes you can be most helpful to a group member by listening empathically without interrupting.
2. Disclosure - one way to be supportive to another group member is to disclose a similar experience. By saying, "Me, too!" you can show the other person that you understand how he or she feels.

***Note: Some groups may not be ready to meet on their own after only six weeks. It is important to wait until there is some degree of group cohesion and there is a core group of regulars that can provide a support structure (for a discussion and examples, see Simoni and Adelman, 1993. It is up to the individual group members to determine if the group is ready to meet on their own.

OFF-SITE CONSULTATION

After the sixth meeting, the group starters' contact with the group will be limited to consulting at the members' request. Although the separation may be tearful for both sides at first, it is essential to the empowerment model to allow the parents to continue on their own. The process of actively participating in and leading their own group can be as beneficial to parents as what they learn from the content of the meetings.

Typical Reactions to the Starters' Departure

After the groups starters leave as active participants, two extreme reactions may occur: (1) the members never attempt to make contact with the group starters or (2) the members continually contact the starters, trying to convince them they cannot continue on their own. The former situation should be seen as a victory. The group members who do not contact the starters have learned to function on their own. (Ironically, although this is the desired outcome, the group starter may feel sorrow at no longer being needed!) At the other extreme, a group whose members can not separate from the starters, requires some additional intervention. Be patient and supportive. Some groups take longer to trust their own power and ability. If necessary, the group starters can come back and visit the group after the members have run several meetings on their own. At this point, the starters should contribute only as participants and should not direct the meeting.

Common Consultation Requests

In contrast to both these extreme reactions, most groups will continue on their own with only an occasional call. Typical concerns members raise are how to recruit new members or what to do with a troublesome member. As in all contacts with the group, the starters should strive to empower the parents. Often parents can resolve their dilemmas once they are given permission to trust their own abilities. In the case of recruiting, the starter can urge the members to use the strategies employed initially. The structure of the meetings, with rotating roles for group leaders and timekeepers, will help lessen the negative effects of controlling or inactive members. In the event that some members are disruptive, the starters can help the members problem solve among themselves or can make appropriate referrals.

A FINAL WORD

A mutual support group will not be the answer for every parent, so expect some drop outs. And some groups may not survive at all. However, do not underestimate the impact of the group. Even in a few short meetings, parents may have learned something important.

EXHIBITS

A. Flyer Announcing Mutual Support Groups for Parents

B. Flyer Announcing Mutual Support Groups for Parents (Spanish Version)

C. Flyer Announcing Mutual Support Groups for Parents (In Spanish and English)

D. Recruitment Flyer (In Spanish and English)

E. Cover Letter to Teachers Accompanying Flyers

F. "Guidelines' Handout for Distribution to Members

G. "Guidelines" Handout for Distribution to Members (Spanish Version)

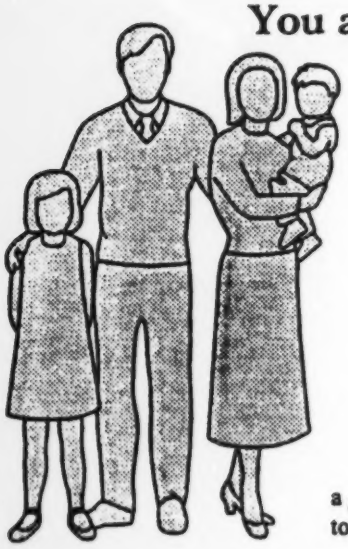
H. "Meeting Format' Handout for Distribution to Members

I. "Meeting Format" Handout for Distribution to Members (Spanish Version)

J. "W.I.S.E. Advice' Handout for Distribution to Members

K. "W.I.S.E. Advice" Handout for Distribution to Members (Spanish Version)

Exhibit A:
Flyer Announcing Mutual Support Groups for Parents



You are invited to attend **Parenttalk**

-a new parent support group!

WHAT IS PARENTTALK?

Parents talking to parents in small weekly discussion groups.

- Talking about raising children, discipline, school, gangs, drugs or anything else
- Sharing experiences
- Receiving advice and support
- Making new friends
- Having fun!

WHO IS THE GROUP FOR?

You! The group is FOR and will be run BY parents. With some initial help from a group trainer, parents will learn how to run the meetings. Parenttalk is a way for parents to help parents, not for professional to tell parents what to do.

HOW DO I JOIN?

Fill in the form below and send it back to school in the envelope attached!
CHILD CARE WILL BE PROVIDED AT THE MEETINGS

EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT ABLE TO ATTEND, PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THE FORM.

CHECK ONE:

_____ **NO, I am not interested in a parent-led group.**

_____ **YES, please send me more information.**

The best days of the week for me are (circle):

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

The best times of the day for me are (circle):

8 9 10 11 Noon 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Child care will be provided at the meetings.

Child's Name: _____ **Child's Teacher:** _____

Your name: _____

Home Phone #: _____ **Work Phone #:** _____

Best times to call: _____

Is it OK if we call you? _____ **YES** _____ **NO**

Exhibit B:
Flyer Announcing Mutual Support Groups for Parents
(Spanish Version)

Esta Usted Invitado Asistir a **PadresHablan**

-un nuevo grupo de apoyo para padres!

¿QUE ES PADRESHABLAN?

Padres platicando con padres en pequeno grupos semanales.

- Hablando sobre criar ninos, disciplina, escuela, pandillas, o cualguier otra cosa.
- Compartiendo experiencias
- Recibiendo apoyo y consejos practicos
- Haciendo nuevas amistades
- Divertiendose

¿PARA QUIEN ES EL GRUPO?

Usted! Professionales ayudaran a comenzar el grupo y ayudaran a los padres a dirijir las juntas. Regresaran cuando ayuda sea necesaria. Sin embargo, el grupo es PARA y sera manejado POR los padres.

¿COMO ME INGRESO?

Llene la forma que esta abajo y regresela a la escuela en el sobre incluido!
CUIDADO DE NINOS SERA DISPONIBLE EN TODAS LAS JUNTAS

AUNQUE USTED NO PUEDA ASISTIR, POR FAVOR LLENE Y DEVUELVA LA FORMA.

MARQUE UNA:

_____ NO, no estoy interesado en el grupo de padres.

_____ SI, por favor mandeme mas informacion.

Los mejores dias de la semana para mi son (encircule):

Lunes Martes Miercules Jueves Viernes Sabado Domingo

Las mejores horas del dia para mi son (encircule):

8 9 10 11 12 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Cuidado de ninos sera disponible en todas las juntas.

Nombre del nino: _____

Su nombre: _____

Numero de casa: _____ **Numero del trabajo:** _____

Mejor tiempo para llamar: _____

Esta bien si le llamamos? _____ **SI** _____ **NO**

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Exhibit C:
Flyer Announcing Mutual Support Groups for Parents
(In Spanish and English)

You are invited to attend

ParentTalk

- a new parent support group!

Parents talking to parents in small weekly discussion groups.

- *Talking about raising children, discipline, school, gangs, drugs, or anything else*
- *Just listening to other parents*
- *Receiving advice and support*
- *Making new friends*
- *Having fun!*

CHILD CARE WILL BE PROVIDED AT THE MEETINGS.

TUESDAY MORNINGS 8:15 TO 9:45AM
THURSDAY EVENINGS 7:00-8:30PM

Esta Usted Invitado a Asistir

PadresHablan

- un nuevo grupo de apoyo para padres!

Padres platicando con padres en pequeno grupos semanales.

- *Hablando sobre criar ninos, disciplina, escuela, pandillas, o cualguier otra cosa*
- *Solamente escuchando a los otros padres*
- *Recibiendo apoyo y consejos practicos*
- *Haciendo nuevas amistades*
- *Divertiendose*

CUIDADO DE NINOS SERA DISPONIBLE EN TODAS LAS JUNTAS.
Habra un grupo para las personas que hablan espanol.

MARTES 8:15-9:45AM

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Exhibit D:
Recruitment Flyer (In Spanish and English)

You are invited to attend
ParentTalk

- a new parent discussion group!

Parents talking to parents in small weekly discussion groups.

- **Talking about raising children, discipline, school, gangs, drugs, or anything else**
- **Just listening to other parents**
- **Receiving advice and support**
- **Making new friends**
- **Having fun!**

CHILD CARE WILL BE PROVIDED AT THE MEETINGS.

Esta Usted Invitado a Asistir
PadresHablan

- un nuevo grupo de platicas para padres!

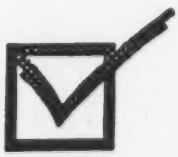
Padres platicando con padres en pequeno grupos semanales.

- **Hablando sobre criar ninos, disciplina, escuela, pandillas, o cualquier otra cosa**
- **Solamente escuchando a los otros padres**
- **Recibiendo apoyo y consejos practicos**
- **Haciendo nuevas amistades**
- **Divertiendose**

CUIDADO DE NINOS SERA DISPONIBLE EN TODAS LAS JUNTAS.
Habra un grupo para las personas que hablan espanol.

CHECK ONE/MARQUE UNA:

_____ NO, I am not interested in a parent-led group.
NO, no estoy interesado en el grupo de padres.



_____ YES, please send me more information.
SI, por favor mandeme mas informacion.

Child's Name/Nombre del nino: _____

Your name/Su nombre: _____

Home Phone #/Numero de telefono de casa: _____

Work Phone #/Numero de telefono del trabajo: _____

Is it OK if we call you? _____ YES _____ NO Esta bien si le llamamos? _____ SI _____ NO

TUESDAYS / LOS MARTES 8:15AM

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Exhibit E:
Cover Letter to Teachers Accompanying Flyers

Dear Teacher:

We will be giving parents the opportunity to join support/discussion groups here at the school.

For the program to be a success, we need to make certain that the attached flyers are given to the students and that they are encouraged to take them home to their parents.

As you can read in the flyer, we are asking parents to fill out the flyer, put it in the attached envelope, and have their children bring it back to you. There is a big box in the office where all the envelopes are being collected. Please just drop them off as they come in.

The new parent groups are called "ParentTalk/PadresHablan." There will be a group for English-speakers and a group for Spanish-speakers. We are going to help the parents get the groups going and then the parents will meet on their own.

We are going to tally all the responses and then call the parents to let them know when the first group will be meeting.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact _____.

Thank you for continuing efforts to make the school a better place for parents.

Exhibit F:
'Guidelines' Handout for Distribution to Members

PARENTTALK

GUIDELINES

1. Time Limits

The group starts on time and ends on time.

2. Attendance

Try to come to every meeting, especially in the beginning. New members are always welcome.

3. Confidentiality

Do not gossip.

4. No Cross-Talk

Do not interrupt other people.

Exhibit G: "Guidelines" Handout for Distribution to Members (Spanish Version)

PADRESHABLAN

REGLAMENTOS

1. Limites de Tiempo

El grupo comienza a tiempo y se termina a tiempo.

2. Assistencia

Tratar de venir a cada junta, especialmente a las primeras juntas. Nuevos miembros siempre son bienvenidos.

3. Confidencialidad

No chismes.

4. No Hablar al Mismo Tiempo

No interumpe a otra qente.

Exhibit H:
"Meeting Format" Handout for Distribution to Members

PARENTTALK

FOUR-PART MEETING FORMAT

1. Announcements

-Any news or upcoming events.

2. Check-in (go around the circle)

-Hello, my name is_____
-I am feeling _____ today.
-I would like to talk or hear about _____.

3. Grout, discussion time

-Everyone gets a chance to talk.
-Remember, no cross-talk!
-Just listening is OK, too.

4. Wrap-up (go around the circle)

-Thank you for helping me with
-See you next time!

LEADER AND TIMEKEEPER

1. Leader

-Brings refreshments
-Greets new members and explains the group to them
-Reviews guidelines at beginning of meeting
-Makes sure everyone gets a chance to talk
-Chooses a leader and timekeeper for next meeting

2. Timekeeper

-In charge of child care
-Makes sure meeting starts on time
-Announces when its time for the wrap-up
-Makes sure meeting ends on time

Exhibit I: "Meeting Format' Handout for Distribution to Members (Spanish Version)

PADRESHABLAN

LAS CUATRO PARTES DEL GRUPO

1. Anuncios

-Alguna noticia o eventos

2. *Oue Tal* (go around the circle)

-Hola, mi nombre es _____.
-Hola, yo me siento _____ hoy.
-Me gustaria hablar o escuchar algo acercade _____.

3. Tiempo Para Discusion

-Todas tienen una oportunidad de hablar.
-Acuerdanse de no hablar al mismo tiempo.
-Solamente escuchar esta bien.

4. Dar Cierre (go around the circle)

-Gracias d ayudarme.
-Nos vemos para la proxima junta.

LIDER AND GUARDATIEMPO

1. Lider

-Trae refrescos
-Saluda a nuevo miembos y les explica del grupo
-Revisa los reglamentos al comienzo del la junta
-Asegura que todos tengan oportunidad de hablar
-Escoge al lider y al guardatiempo para la siguiente junta

2. Guardatiempo

-Esta encargo del cuidadode ninos
-Asegura que la junta comienze a tiempo
-Anuncia cuando es hora de "Dar Cierre"
-Asequra que la junta termine a timepo

Exhibit J:
"W.I.S.E. Advice" Handout for Distribution to Members

PARENTTALK

W.I.S.E ADVICE

W - Does the person *want* to hear advice?

I - Are you *informed* about what the person has already tried?

S - Has the advice you want to give been *successful* for you?

E - Are you trying to be *empathetic* and caring as well as helpful?

Exhibit K:
"W.I.S.E. Advice" Handout for Distribution to Members
(Spanish Version)

PADRESHABLAN

COMO Y QUIEN LO D.I.C.E.

D -Esta la persona *dispuesta* a ar sugerencias?

I - Estas *informada* de lo que ya ha tratado de hace la persona?

C - Estas tratando de *comprender* y ayudar?

E - Las sugerencias que has dado han sido un *exito*?

Additional Resources

Some National Self-Help Clearinghouses and Websites that are Relevant to Mutual Support Groups

Some Data

Some National Self-Help Clearinghouses and Websites Relevant to Mutual Support Groups

Following is a list of some national clearinghouses that provide information and technical assistance on starting and running support groups. Many of these agencies have materials and publications that may be helpful in for organizing and running mutual support groups, as well as information on the issues that may be of concern for support group members.

American Self-Help Clearinghouse

Maintains database of national self-help headquarters and model one-of-a-kind groups. Provides referrals to self-help clearinghouses nationwide. Offers assistance to persons interested in starting new groups. For handout on starting groups, send a self-addressed stamped envelope. Publishes directory of national support groups.
Write: American Self-Help Clearinghouse, Northwest Covenant Medical Center, 25 Pocono Rd., Denville, NJ 07834. Call (201)625-7101;
FAX: (201)625-8848; TDD: (201)625-9053;
E-Mail: ashc@bc.cybernex.net;
Web Site: http://www.cmhc.com/selfhelp

National Self-Help Clearinghouse

Information and referral to self-help groups and regional self-help clearinghouses. Encourages and conducts training of professionals about self help; carries out research activities. Publishes manuals, training materials and a newsletter.
Write: National Self-Help Clearinghouse, CUNY, Graduate School and University Ctr., 25 W. 43rd St., Rm. 620, New York, NY 10036.
Call: (212)354-8525;
FAX: (212)642-1956.

National Mental Health Consumers Self-Help Clearinghouse

Consumer self-help resource information geared towards meeting the individual and group needs of mental health consumers. Assistance in advocacy, listings of publications, on-site consultations, training, educational events. Funded by Center of Mental Health Services.
Write: National Mental Health Consumers Self-Help Clearinghouse, 1211 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19107-4103.
Call: 800-553-4-KEY
FAX: (215)735-0275.

National Empowerment Center

Consumer-run center that provides information on local self-help resources and upcoming conferences. Also provides networking, conference calls and workshops.
Write: National Empowerment Center, 20 Ballard Rd., Lawrence, MA 01843.
Call: (508)685-1518 or 800-POWER-2-U;
FAX: (508)681-6426;
TTY: 800-889-7693.

Resource Clearinghouses

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)

NCADI is the largest repository of substance abuse treatment and prevention information in the country. NCADI has over 450 items including fact sheets, booklets, posters, videotapes, audiotapes, monographs, and magazines on all aspects related to alcohol and other drugs of abuse. This clearinghouse also has information that is particularly geared toward developing prevention programs in the community, and can provide information for those interested in forming mutual support groups that address prevention issues, obtaining resources, and implementing prevention programs.

Contact: P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD, 20847-2345
Call: 800-729-6686; 301-468-2600
Website: http://www.health.org/

The Wisconsin Clearinghouse: Prevention Resources

The Wisconsin Clearinghouse has been providing educational and training materials, information and services nationally for more than 20 years. The mission of the Wisconsin Clearinghouse is to help schools, families, and communities to lead healthy, productive lives. The clearinghouse offers materials for youth workers, communities, parents and educators. Many of these materials are free or can be obtained at a low cost.

Contact: 1552 University Ave. Madison, WI 53705
Call: 800-322-1468; or 800-248-9244
Fax: 608-262-6346
Website: http://www.uhs.wisc.edu/wch/

The Self-Help Interest Group

The Self-Help Interest Group is an international organization of researchers, self-help leaders, and policy makers that promotes research and action related to self-help groups and organizations.

For more information, contact: Keith Humphreys at 415-617-2746
Email: D6.F52@forsyth.stanford.edu

Websites

Mental Health Net's Self Help Page: The Self Help Sourcebook Online

http://www.cmhc.com/selfhelp/

The Self-Help Sourcebook Online is a searchable database that includes information on approximately 700+ national and demonstrational model self-help support groups, ideas for starting groups, and opportunities to link with others to develop new groups. This website also has documents on many of the psychosocial issues that are of concern for participants in mutual support groups (e.g., alcohol and drug use, diseases, violence, equal rights, etc.). Included is information about agencies (organized by state and community) that can provide technical assistance and guidance on a variety of self-help and group management issues. Most of this information can be obtained directly by contacting the American Self-Help Clearinghouse.

Parents Involved Network (PIN)

http://libertynet.org/~mha/pin.html

Parents Involved Network is a state-wide (Pennsylvania), parent-run, self-help advocacy, information and referral resource for families of children and adolescents with emotional or behavioral disorders. PIN provides families with an opportunity to share common concerns, exchange information, identify resources, and influence policy issues affecting children and adolescents who have behavioral disorders.

Some Data:
Exerpts from Two Evaluation Articles

Journal of Community Psychology

Volume 21, July 1993

Latina Mothers' Help Seeking at a School-Based Mutual Support Group

Jane M. Simoni

University of California, Los Angeles

Low-income Latino parents constitute a vulnerable population who are underserved by traditional mental health services but difficult to recruit to more culturally sensitive community interventions. In order to identify factors that may facilitate participation, a cognitive-motivational framework was employed to study help seeking at a school-based mutual support group (MSG) for low-income Latino parents. Phone interview data from 75 Latina mothers generally supported hypothesized differences between nonattenders and attendees. Specifically, attendees initially reported (a) greater parenting stress, (b) less confidence in parenting abilities but comparable psychological coping resources, (c) less satisfaction with and greater need for social support, (d) less negative attitudes toward help seeking, and (e) more previous school involvement. A discriminant analysis revealed that need for parenting advice and prior school involvement accounted for 34% of the variance between attenders and nonattenders. Implications for enhancing program utilization are discussed.

The Urban Review
Volume 25 (4), 1993

School-Based Mutual Support Groups for Low-income Parents

Jane M. Simoni and Howard S. Adelman

School-based mutual support groups (MSGs) are proposed to enhance the school involvement of parents from lower socioeconomic and ethnic minority backgrounds. We present a school-based MSG format, findings from a survey regarding parent interest, and discussion of a pilot demonstration implementation in three urban elementary schools.

A review of the literature on parents and schooling indicates widespread endorsement of parent involvement, with consistent reports of positive effects for students (Comer, 1988; Davies, 1987, 1991; Dye, 1989; Epstein, 1987, 1990; Goldenberg, 1987, 1989; Hawley and Rosenholtz, 1983; Hendersen, 1987). Summarizing research findings, Epstein (1987) concludes, 'The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children's achievements, attitudes, and aspirations, even after student ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account" (p. 120).

Equally well documented are the relatively low levels of school involvement among parents from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds (Ascher, 1988; Ascher and Flaxman, 1985, Davies, 1988; Herman and Yeh, 1983; Lareau, 1987; McLaughlin and Shields, 1987). To enhance school involvement and improve child-rearing skills among these groups, many schools offer time-limited parent-training sessions typically consisting of lessons and discussions led by professionals (e.g., Myers, Alvy, Arrington, Richardson, Marigna, Huff, Main, & Newcomb, 1992). Nieto (1985) views these efforts as often flawed by paternalism, opportunism, manipulation, insensitivity to cultural and class realities, and fear among school staff of losing control. Others stress that most school-dominated parent programs fail to empower parents and lack a sustained and coherent strategy for increasing their involvement in schooling (Mannan and Blackwell, 1992).

As an alternative approach, we have begun to explore the feasibility of school-based mutual support groups (Simoni, 1991, 19928, 1992b, 1992c; Simoni and Adelman, 1991a, 1991b). This strategy builds on a growing body of work related to community-based mutual support groups (see reviews by Jacobs and Goodman, 1989; Katz and Bender, 1976; Lieberman and Borman, 1979; Powell, 1987, 1990). Efficacy studies report improvements in several aspects of social and psychological functioning among MSG attendees (Lieberman, 1986). With respect to low-income parents, MSGs are seen as capable of bolstering self-esteem, self-confidence, and such values as individuality, self-worth and respect (Leon, Mazur, Montalvo, and Rodrieguez, 1994).

Discussion of Interview Findings

Among this sample of low-income parents, the interviews underscored a reasonable amount of support for the idea of parents running their own groups (60% of the Repliers endorsed the concept). At the same time, it must be recognized that 40% of the Repliers did not endorse parent-run groups. We suggest this finding may have reflected the extent to which they had been disempowered and were convinced that they lacked competence.

Most striking about the reported obstacles to school involvement was the large number that were removable. For example, the need for child care, convenient scheduling, and groups in languages other than English seemed relatively easy to address.

With respect to analyses comparing the Replier and Nonreplier groups, the most prominent finding was that the parents interested in MSGs reported more extensive social and psychological coping resources (i.e., greater social networks and higher life satisfaction). Although the correlational design precludes causal conclusions, this finding may indicate that the Repliers were accustomed to establishing useful social networks and that their superior resources facilitated interest and involvement (see Telleen, 1990). Parents who have comparable, or greater need but lack the necessary resources for attendance are likely to be among the most difficult to recruit.

The analysis involving English proficiency have relevance for reports of greater school involvement of English-proficient parents. Our findings indicate that the Latino Repliers who spoke English possessed as well other resources that might facilitate involvement (i.e., higher socioeconomic levels, fewer obstacles to school involvement, and larger social networks). However, despite their relative lack of resources, the non-English-speaking Repliers had equally high levels of interest in involvement, reported more frequent use of informal social networks, and indicated a greater desire to discuss personal problems in the groups. Based on these findings, we do not anticipate that differences in English proficiency will be predictive of MSG attendance.

Discussion of the Pilot Demonstration

In summary, although most parents, especially monolingual Spanish-speakers, were initially reluctant to take on the responsibility of running their own group, they eventually demonstrated significant interest and ability to maintain parent-led groups over a reasonable period of time. This was the case for parents with and without English-proficiency, even though the latter group reported more obstacles to involvement. Overall, the demonstration provides preliminary evidence of the feasibility of school-based MSGs.

From the perspective of increasing parental involvement in schools and schooling, the findings run counter to stereotypes that depict low-income and non-English-speaking parents as uninterested. Moreover, they suggest that interventions such as MSGs are worth pursuing as a part of efforts to enhance school involvement within this population.

Equally important, the experiences indicate the types of difficulties that should be expected and suggest ways to improve subsequent implementation. First, there is a need for more powerful recruitment strategies. A direct mailing or invitation by computerized telephoning techniques, although costly, probably would reach more parents. Personalized invitations (e.g., parents recruiting other parents, approaching parents as they drop their children off at

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school) have proved here and elsewhere (Klimes-Dougan, Lopez, Nelson, & Adelman. 1992) to be a highly successful strategy.

Second, further efforts are needed to remove obstacles to parental involvement. Clearly, many parents could attend only as long as child care was provided. Other barriers to be addressed include scheduling, transportation, and accommodation of a variety of languages. Although efforts were made to schedule groups conveniently, the times were not good for many parents. Others might have come if carpools had been arranged. And, of course, some parents did not attend because groups in languages other than English and Spanish were not offered.

Third, groups should be implemented early in a school year. The groups that disbanded when the school year ended probably would have built greater group cohesion and would have continued if they had been meeting together from the beginning of the school year. In addition, training may need to be longer. The California Self-Help Center (1985) prescribes a 12-week training period.

Finally, a critical mass of group members seems necessary for group success. The consultant might consider delaying the training phase until a core group of 8- 12 members has committed. With reference to the most successful group, we have already suggested a few reasons for its longevity. Future research needs to assess contextual variables and implementation parameters such as school and neighborhood characteristics (see Bauman, Stein, & Ireys, 1992). Once factors leading to group longevity are more fully understood, future re search can begin determining the effects of participation in school-based MSGs and how widely useful such groups may be. In this event, the usual range of questions about group composition and transactions will need to be studied (see Lieberman & Bond, 1979).

Conclusion

Our work thus far indicates that low-income parents with and without English proficiency demonstrate interest and ability with respect to leading their own MSGs in the schools. These findings lend support to the utility and feasibility of such groups. The data also contradict generalizations suggesting that low-income parents are hard to reach or uninterested in participating in such groups or in becoming involved at school. Indeed, the work represents another instance (see Davies, 1988) where attempts to involve low-income or non-English-speaking parents appeared to yield positive benefits as long as the activity was of interest and addressed institutional, cultural, class, language, and personal barriers.

We hope you found this to be a useful resource. There's more where this came from!

This packet has been specially prepared by our Clearinghouse. Other Introductory Packets and materials are available. Resources in the Clearinghouse are organized around the following categories.

CLEARINGHOUSE CATEGORIES

Systemic Concerns

- Policy issues related to mental health in schools
- Mechanisms and procedures for program/service coordination
  - Collaborative Teams
  - School-community service linkages
  - Cross disciplinary training and interprofessional education
- Comprehensive, integrated programmatic approaches (as contrasted with fragmented, categorical, specialist oriented services)
- Issues related to working in rural, urban, and suburban areas
- Restructuring school support service
  - Systemic change strategies
  - Involving stakeholders in decisions
  - Staffing patterns
  - Financing
  - Evaluation, Quality Assurance
  - Legal Issues
- Professional standards
- Other System Topics: _____

Programs and Process Concerns:

- Clustering activities into a cohesive, programmatic approach
  - Support for transitions
  - Mental health education to enhance healthy development & prevent problems
  - Parent/home involvement
  - Enhancing classrooms to reduce referrals (including prereferral interventions)
  - Use of volunteers/trainees
  - Outreach to community
  - Crisis response
  - Crisis and violence prevention (including safe schools)
- Staff capacity building & support
  - Cultural competence
  - Minimizing burnout
- Interventions for student and family assistance
  - Screening/Assessment
  - Enhancing triage & ref. processes
  - Least Intervention Needed
  - Short-term student counseling
  - Family counseling and support
  - Case monitoring/management
  - Confidentiality
  - Record keeping and reporting
  - School-based Clinics
- Other program and process concerns: _____

Psychosocial Problems

- Drug/alcoh. abuse
- Depression/suicide
- Grief
- Dropout prevention
- Learning Problems
- Pregnancy prevention/support
- Eating problems (anorexia, bulim.)
- Physical/Sexual Abuse
- Neglect
- Gangs
- Self-esteem
- Relationship problems
- Anxiety
- Disabilities
- Gender and sexuality
- Reactions to chronic illness
- School Adjustment (including newcomer acculturation)
- Other Psychosocial problems: _____